



# A critical assessment of selected climate policies and their shortfalls

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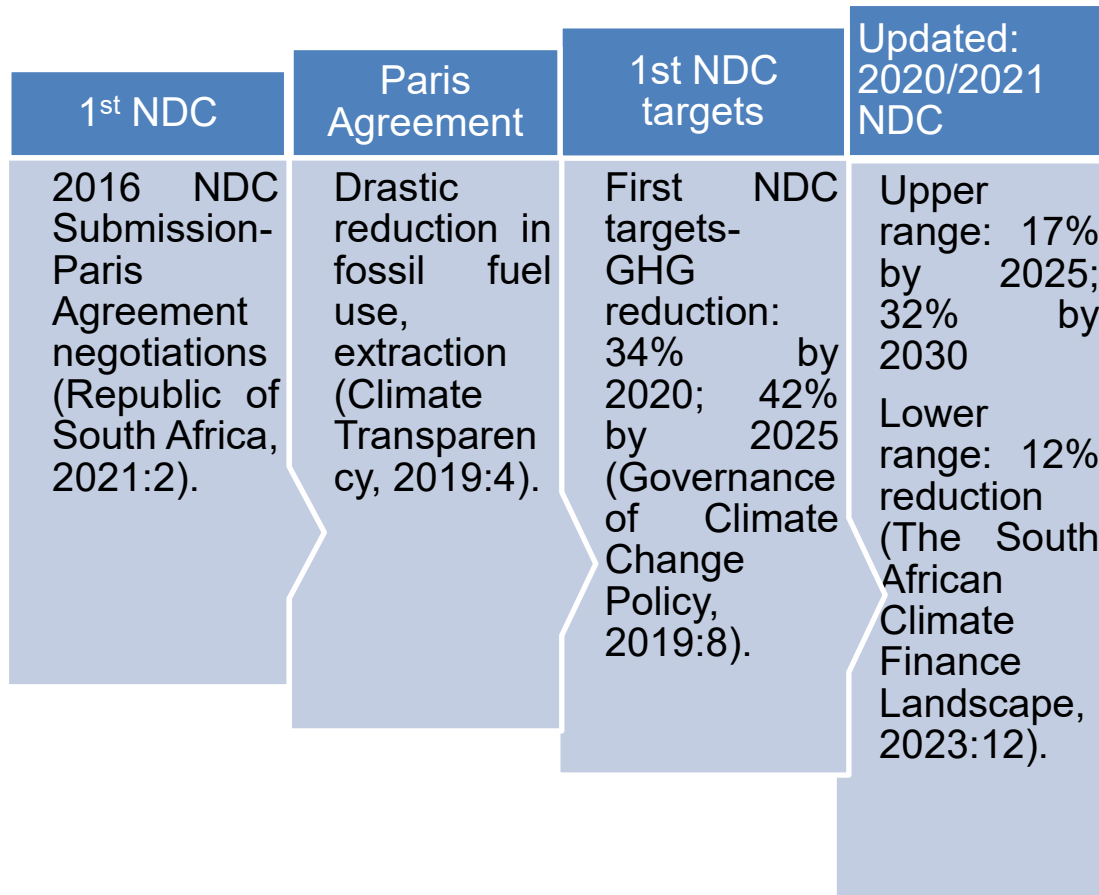
# Background

- SA- highest regional GHG emitter.
- January 2025- coal share 74.31% of energy mix.
- Government policy- end coal power station construction- post-2030 target.
- Multipronged dilemma:
  - Energy security crisis
  - Decarbonisation challenge
  - Just transition imperative.
- 2025, an important climate policy year:
  - COP30
  - G20.
- Existing research- economy, environment, development.
- Knowledge gaps- workers, vulnerable communities.

# Literature Review

- 2015 NDC Commitment- South Africa's peak–plateau–decline trajectory, targeting 398–614 MtCO<sub>2</sub>e (2025–2030), aligned- Climate Change White Paper (Altieri et al. 2016:79).
- COP26 Declaration- Inclusive low-carbon transition- benefits for all- capacity building; finance; innovation; just policy measures (Johansson, 2023:241).
- Just transition goal- empower marginalised communities, workers, small businesses to benefit from sustainable economy opportunities (Patel, 2021:7).
- Just Transition Focus- Job security; social support; skills development; environmental rehabilitation; local business growth. (Mutezo and Mulopo, 2021:5).
- Energy- Intensive Sectors- Workers, communities highly vulnerable to low-carbon transition impacts (Hermanus and Montmasson-Clair, 2021).
- Green economy potential- job creation in renewables. Challenges (Njokwe et al. 2025:2):
  - Low growth;
  - Skills gaps;
  - Limited technology;
  - Aging infrastructure;
  - Political constraints,
  - Fragile institutions.

# SA Climate Policy Context



- Climate action plan- just transition for workers, vulnerable communities toward a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy (Climate Transparency, 2019:4).
- Just transition in SA NDC. Collaboration (for fossil fuel phase-out):
  - Government;
  - Labour;
  - Business;
  - Civil society (A Framework For a Just Transition in South Africa, 2022).
- Climate pathway challenges-address poverty; inequality; unemployment; ensure just, inclusive transition for marginalised communities (Net Zero CO<sub>2</sub> Emission Pathways for South Africa, 2024:8).

# Policies

- Two adaptation policies:
  - The National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (2020);
  - The Climate Change Bill (2024).
- Two mitigation policies:
  - The IRP (2024);
  - The Carbon Tax (2019).
- Three MOI policies:
  - The Just Transition Framework (2022);
  - The Green Fund (2012);
  - The JET-IP (2022).

# Policy Review

- Framework: Zwane and Montmasson-Clair (2016); & Marxist critique.
- Policy Review: 7 key, SA climate policies.
- Criteria:
  - Institutional;
  - Financial;
  - Socioeconomic;
  - Technological;
  - Market-based.
- Institutional barriers:
  - Limited capacity; fragmented governance; underinvestment; market over public development.
  - Workers, communities excluded from policy formulation.
- Financial barriers:
  - Low public funds; cautious private investment; donor reliance.
  - Limited capacity for just transition.
  - Treat climate finance as public good.

# Policy Review

- Socioeconomic barriers:

- Environmental sustainability vs. profit-driven priorities.
- Job losses, livelihood insecurity.
- Market-first climate action deepens inequality.

- Technological barriers:

- Low local capacity; import reliance; underinvestment.
- Weak job creation; reinforces global inequality.
- Carbon lock-in; high renewable costs.

- Market-based barriers:

- Energy sector:
  - Monopolistic;
  - Profit-driven.
- Eskom dominance; limited liberalisation.
- Carbon Tax ignores structural inequality.

# International Policy Review

- Paris Agreement:
  - Stabilises- not transformational.
  - Climate crisis stems from capitalism- not market failure.
- CBAM:
  - EU protected; developing countries and labour bear costs.
  - Violates 'common but differentiated responsibilities.'
  - Risks deepening uneven development; blocks solidarity.

- NDCs:
  - Manages environmental risks; protects existing property and market power.
  - Benefits certain regions and sectors.
  - Inclusion claims lack enforceable measures.
  - Minimal environment/social gains; possibility of new dispossession.

# Content Analysis: SA Themes

- Energy Sector:
  - Political economy of energy transition.
  - Workforce vulnerability.
  - Climate policy- IP; regional development; LMP.
  - The transition ≠ technocratic.
- Local government:
  - Challenges: capacity; funding; coordination planning; weak institutions.
  - Climate policy review: assess policy implementation at municipal level.
- Finance:
  - Underfunding of adaptation.
  - Socioeconomic factors linked to climate vulnerability.
  - Policy focus: poverty and inequality reduction; centre labour; promote adaptation.
- Legislation, Regulation, and Policy Coherence:
  - Policy alignment, enhanced governance structures- critical to a just transition.
  - SA policy, strategies, frameworks- align with climate goals.
  - Institutional mandates- structure accordingly.
- Nature-based solutions:
  - Integrate adaptation and mitigation strategies.
  - Consider sectors beyond energy and industry- agriculture, land, water, etc.

# Content Analysis: Global Themes

- Adaptation vs. Mitigation:
  - Mitigation prioritised over adaptation.
  - Weak planning, coordination, and monitoring for adaptation.
  - Address emissions; vulnerabilities; resilience; structural barriers to adaptation.
- Just Transition:
  - Who benefits; who bears burdens; impacts on workers, communities; Global South.
  - Themes: procedural, distributive, restorative justice- African literature.
  - Climate action- broader development; labour; rights-based, not purely technical.
  - Language focus on social protection, labour rights, and community ownership.
- Climate Finance:
  - Focus- mobilising private finance; blended finance; de-risking.
  - bankable projects; neglects adaptation, community needs, small-scale projects.
  - Inclusive design- ensure finance is equitable.

# Content Analysis: Global Themes

- Governance:
  - Challenge- moving from planning to implementation.
  - Mainstream climate goals; align policies; strengthen M&E.
  - Constrained institutions, mechanisms widen implementation gap.
- Technological aspects:
  - Technical solutions blur broader structural change.
  - Path dependency; technological dependency; IP; technology transfer.
  - Integrate socioeconomic factors into policy, beyond technological solutions.
- Market-based instruments:
  - Growing use of carbon pricing, ET- brings risks for land rights, equity, and governance.
  - Market dominance of mitigation strategies- non-market solutions often sidelined.
  - Design Focus: Ensure fairness, safeguards, and shared benefits.

# Policy Recommendations

- Policy Alignment: Link climate, industrial, development policy; maintain productivity, decarbonise without deindustrialising (Montmasson-Clair and Patel, 2024).
- Data Systems: Improve labour, data for better monitoring; forecasting; economic responsiveness (Johnson, 2016).
- Inclusive Planning: Co-design projects with communities to protect land, health, livelihoods (PCC, 2021).
- Local priorities: Integrate community needs- energy access, jobs, local procurement. Engage stakeholders- align investments with climate, development goals (Community Power Agency, 2021).
- Labour Collaboration: Create company–union agreements for fair, worker-centred emission reduction plans (ITUC, 2021).
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- Support SMMEs: Use incentives; finance access; simple regulations to grow small businesses, create jobs (Duval and Shibata, 2021).
- Worker Transition: Focus on reskilling, retraining, and redeployment- not layoffs (ITUC, 2018).
- Build green industrial base via public-private partnerships- TVET colleges; universities; research institutions (IEA, 2022; IPCC, 2023).
- Affordable housing: Expansion of housing, land trusts (Marcinkiewicz, 2023).
- LMPs: Job placements, apprenticeships, wage subsidies- youth, women, long-term unemployed workers; integrate social protections (ILO, 2021).